

National  
*Recovery Month*

Prevention Works • Treatment is Effective • People Recover

SEPTEMBER 2011

JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

---

# RECOVERY BENEFITS EVERYONE

## PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT RECOVERY



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

**SAMHSA**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) • 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727)



# JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

Every year, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), sponsors ***National Recovery Month: Prevention Works, Treatment is Effective, People Recover (Recovery Month)***. This initiative celebrates that all individuals have the fundamental and inherent value and need to be accepted and treated with respect, dignity, and worth. Each September, the campaign raises awareness that behavioral health is an essential part of health and one's overall wellness, and that substance use and mental disorders are treatable and people can and do recover. The observance celebrates people in recovery and those who work in the treatment field.

This year's ***Recovery Month*** theme, ***“Join the Voices for Recovery: Recovery Benefits Everyone,”*** encourages community leaders, health care providers, and people in the workplace to inform all individuals that the Affordable Care Act expands coverage to those previously uninsured, and that the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA) includes many new provisions aimed at improving coverage for and access to substance use and mental health treatment and recovery support services. The theme also encourages family members and friends to support those they know on their path to recovery.

The following narratives bring this theme to life in a unique and personal way. They highlight the positive effects of treatment and recovery, and the effects substance use and mental disorders have on an individual as well as those surrounding them. Learn from these stories, share their voices, and take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective treatment for those still in need.



# RICK DYER

**LAW OFFICES OF RICHARD J. DYER**  
NEWTON, MA

My story proves that recovery can help and is effective.

Despite coming from a happy family, I was dependent on alcohol and drugs by my early teens. Addiction quickly left me homeless, helpless, and penniless, robbing me of my youth and driving me to spend years in jail. Regardless, the love and commitment of the recovery community helped me learn the tools and skills to transform my life, return to school, and finally become a trial lawyer and advocate for people with substance use disorders.

It was because of the people who believed in me when I had lost faith in myself that I was able to earn my G.E.D. while incarcerated, and later graduated from college and law school. The Governor of Massachusetts graciously pardoned my past crimes, and I hope to become a judge in my home state. I have been featured in Parade Magazine and have appeared on CBS Weekend News.

Although I am a member of a 12-step group, recovery comes by many paths. It teaches responsibility and self-respect. Recovery has brought me a level of satisfaction and accomplishment I never dreamed was possible while using alcohol and drugs. Most importantly, recovery has shown me how to give back and to love: my community, my family, and most importantly, myself. Recovery works.



# TIMOTHY HOWARD

**PROJECT DEVELOPER**  
**DRUG LAW REFORM – CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES**  
NEW YORK, NY

As a result of a drug treatment program, I began my recovery on April 4, 1990. On that day, I realized a higher power might have a better plan for me if I was willing to surrender long enough.

But recovery was the last thing on my mind in the late 1970s and 1980s as I was running the streets of Harlem. Then, I thought that alcohol and drugs were just an aspect of partying. My frame of mind led me to multiple visits to jail, three broken marriages, abandonment of my three children, and the loss of countless jobs. Not much of a party. I didn't know what my future looked like, but I knew for sure what the past looked like, and I didn't like it.

I sought out 12-step meetings, obtained a sponsor, and worked the program. I returned to school and achieved a bachelor's degree and a master's in social work. Today, I have become a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor and licensed master of social work.

“ I didn't know what my future looked like, but I knew for sure what the past looked like, and I didn't like it. ”

# MARY ANN MAIKISH

**CASAC/VOLUNTEER GROWTH GROUP COUNSELOR  
BETH ISRAEL STUYVESANT SQUARE REHAB  
NEW YORK, NY**

My growth during my 22 years of recovery has been a slow process—sometimes painful, sometimes exhilarating, and always wonderful.

As the third-generation in my family with a substance use disorder, I was no stranger to 12-step programs. I was the child of an alcoholic, tied up in knots, paralyzed emotionally by fears, full of secrets, and longing for oblivion. Despite all this, I appeared to be highly functioning as I worked my way through college and graduated with a bachelor's degree, albeit while using lots of marijuana and LSD.

I was clean during pregnancy and for the first five years of my daughter's life, but being an addict without a program, I picked up alcohol again. I had a good job, a beautiful child, and a loving family, but I was in total denial.

In 1988, my family staged an intervention, which resulted in detoxification, inpatient rehabilitation, outpatient group therapy, individual therapy, and a 12-step program. As a result, I acquired tools of sobriety that I use daily.

Because of my experiences, I can and do contribute to the field as a counselor and member of a 12-step program. I was so honored to have been chosen as the 2010 A&E Delegate from New York State to The Recovery Project in Philadelphia. In addition, I contribute to my community as a member of the Community Emergency Response Team, the Bellevue Hospital Community Advisory Board, and as a volunteer at my synagogue's homeless shelter.

“My growth during my 22 years of recovery has been a slow process—sometimes painful, sometimes exhilarating, and always wonderful.”

***Mary Ann Maikish***



# BETTY CURRIER

**FRIENDS OF RECOVERY NEW YORK**  
COOPERSTOWN, NY

My recovery journey has been nothing short of amazing, filling me with peace, hope, love, and purpose. In short, it's been a life beyond my wildest dreams. For more than 20 years, I managed to look good on the outside, but inside I was drowning in fear, shame, loneliness, and overwhelming hopelessness that no amount of alcohol could fill. I am proud to say that I am in long-term recovery, and I haven't needed a drink to change how I think, feel, or act since January 6, 1976.

My recovery has been enriched, and I've been able to pass on what I was so freely given and experienced firsthand. I've been able to provide support and encouragement to others on their own pathway to recovery. Then an influential movement attracted my attention—advocacy.

Advocacy reaches not only the recovery community, but also the greater population with the message that recovery is real, and policies and services that support recovery are vital. I'm a founding board member of Friends of Recovery of Delaware & Otsego Counties, in New York State, where we operate county recovery community centers and speak out for the needs of individuals living in these very rural areas. More recently, I've helped establish Friends of Recovery New York, a statewide organization that leads recovery advocacy and provides support and encouragement to local communities of recovery as they join us in this nationwide movement.

My commitment and life purpose will always be to demonstrate the reality of recovery for those affected by substance use and mental disorders and to help change public perceptions and embrace recovery. I'm so very proud to be a face and voice of recovery.





# HONESTY LILLER

**THE MCSHIN FOUNDATION**  
RICHMOND, VA

I started using drugs at age 12 and couldn't stop, but am now in long-term recovery.

After I found heroin at age 17, nothing was important to me other than using drugs. During this whirlwind I became pregnant, but that didn't stop me from using. I was in and out of treatment for years until I finally threw my hands up and gave myself to recovery. I was done with the pain of addiction. A recovery community organization took me in and showed me how to live again. I became a member of a 12-step program that has saved my life.

Today, I am surrounded by recovery, and I love every bit of it. I have been drug-free for almost 4 years. I am a proud wife, mother, sister, daughter, and friend. Recovery has turned my life around completely, and for that I am truly grateful.

“ Recovery has turned my life around completely, and for that I am truly grateful. ”

# FRANCISCO TORRES

## WE CAN RECOVER TREATMENT CENTER OLATHE, KS

I was born in Cuba in 1961 to a poor family in a poor town, mistreated because of my economic status. Discrimination, loneliness, sadness, and fear led me to a substance use disorder, but today I'm sober and have been working in the field of recovery.

It wasn't an easy ride. On March 20, 1997, I was desperate to die rather than continue living my life as an addict with no place to live or food to eat. I began praying to God, although I had never believed before in my life. That same day, I went to treatment and have been in recovery ever since.

Since I began my recovery, I enrolled in college and obtained an associate's degree in psychology, a bachelor's degree in applied psychology, and a double master's in clinical and counseling psychology. I started running, first around 200 meters, and have now run 10 full marathons and more than 20 half-marathons.

I own three homes, and I plan to start a recovery home. I also wrote and developed a treatment program, "We Can Recover," for a treatment facility. As part of **Recovery Month**, I was honored to be selected as the 2010 Recovery Project Delegate for the State of Kansas. None of this would have been possible, if it wasn't for the first step I made towards recovery.

“None of this would have been possible, if it wasn't for the first step I made towards recovery.”



# ROB JASPERSON

## CERTIFIED ADDICTIONS COUNSELOR ROSEBURG, OR

Recovery has created a different world for me these past 23 years. I entered a residential program in 1987 at age 40, after my second marriage began to fail and I realized that alcohol had been my best friend for 27 years. We have no way of knowing the damaging effects of our addiction on our families and friends until we change. Addiction causes one to look inward, not out toward others.

That has changed now. In my first year of sobriety, I worked with recovering adolescents. After a 30-year career with the U.S. Postal Service, I returned to college, graduated, and have been a certified addictions counselor for the last five years. I help my clients set the best example they can for their families. We need their love and trust.

I have a happy marriage of 32 years with my wife and enjoy close relationships with my son, daughter, and two grandchildren. I spend my free time playing active sports like road-biking and kayaking, and doing creative arts. I have volunteered for many organizations. I am on the local American Cancer Society's Relay for Life team and am on the volunteer committee with Umpqua Partners Ramble for Recovery. I also enjoy helping local Cub Scouts earn badges.

My greatest and most humbling contribution was to anonymously donate a kidney in 2005. I was also chosen in 2010 to be A&E's Oregon Delegate for Faces and Voices of Recovery in celebration of **Recovery Month**. Recovery is a second chance at life and has shown me that there are no limitations to giving to our community and leading the best life we possibly can.



# BROOKE BECKHAM

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
SIOUX FALLS, SD

Through my experience in recovery, I have emerged as a person who is loved, proud, and grateful to have walked down that path, even if it wasn't easy.

My drinking started when I was 13, and I experienced many consequences from my use of alcohol and drugs. By the time I turned 27, I had been in juvenile placement centers and had a wealth of legal troubles. But today, hope and faith fill my life where despair and disbelief once resided.

My moment of clarity came when I thought about my beautiful little girl. I could continue on a destructive path, losing everything that was important to me, including my life, or I could accept the fact that I needed help. At that point, I became willing to take responsibility for my recovery, my life, and my daughter.

I stopped just attempting to be sober and started to learn how to live in recovery. The result has been a wonderful, beautiful, and powerful journey.

Being clean and sober allows me to share the message of recovery and how it enables you to take an amazing journey to the center of yourself. I want to help people find their whole being, all while healing part of myself with every story I hear from others. I have rebuilt relationships, gone back to school, and am currently pursuing my Ph.D. and working as a mental health therapist in a maximum-security prison. I am now living a life I never dreamed of before recovery.



# CINDY CHRISTY

## **ADDICTION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTER** PRAIRIE VILLAGE, KS

I haven't had a drink or used a drug in over 6 years, and I'm alive today and in long-term recovery because of government-funded treatment programs that help people just like me. However, it wasn't long ago that I was sick, unemployed, and uninsured. Ready to change, I took the first step to recovery by making a difficult phone call, ending up in a nonmedical detox program for people who cannot afford care. After detox, I was guided into a 90-day treatment facility and, although it took multiple attempts to maintain my recovery, those initial periods of treatment were crucial. While those months of care cost the state money, I believe that I have been able to repay that debt over and over.

Today I'm employed, I'm medically insured, I pay taxes, and I volunteer. I also own a registered automobile with auto insurance, have a valid driver's license, and am able to give back to my community. Last September, I was involved in planning Kansas City's first Recovery Month event, The Mike Johnson Memorial Walk for Recovery. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Director, Gil Kerlikowske attended the event, and more than 600 participants came out to help raise awareness that addiction is treatable and recovery is possible.

It's not an exaggeration to say that I know hundreds of people exactly like me in recovery who are well-respected and able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities. I cherish my relationship with my family and community of friends, something I would have missed out on had it not been for the help I received.

# LYNN TYNAN

## **PAST DIRECTOR WE CARE FOUNDATION WOMEN'S RECOVERY CENTER LAS VEGAS, NV**

As a result of a drug treatment program, I began my recovery on April 4, 1990. On that day, I realized a higher power might have a better plan for me if I was willing to surrender long enough.

But recovery was the last thing on my mind in the late 1970s and 1980s as I was running the streets of Harlem. Then, I thought that alcohol and drugs were just an aspect of partying. My frame of mind led me to multiple visits to jail, three broken marriages, abandonment of my three children, and the loss of countless jobs. Not much of a party. I didn't know what my future looked like, but I knew for sure what the past looked like, and I didn't like it.

I sought out 12-step meetings, obtained a sponsor, and worked the program. I returned to school and achieved a bachelor's degree and a master's in social work. Today, I have become a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor and licensed master of social work.

“ My relationships are true and trusting. My wonderful son and I have a beautiful friendship. He is a survivor and a terrific man. When my grandchildren wrap their arms around me and say “I love you, Nanny,” I melt. I could have missed all this. One day at a time, I thank God and my 12-step program for my life. ”

***Lynn Tynan***



# ANDREW ALLEN

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP**  
AMES, IA

Born on 7/7/77, I grew up thinking I'd be lucky. It wasn't until I got sober that I realized just how lucky I am.

I excelled in sports and academics when I was young, but my childhood wasn't easy. I had several run-ins with the law, and by my freshman year of high school, I was failing classes, misdiagnosed as a sociopath, and expelled from school. All that changed once I received treatment at Youth & Shelter Services (YSS) in Ames, IA. There I awoke to a new life.

For the first time, I surrendered. My life changed as I thrived on the concept of giving back. YSS put me on its board and empowered me to become successful.

I got involved in a 12-step recovery. I became a mentor to youth. I finished high school and college, took a Fortune 250 corporate job, and found myself leading my company's United Way campaign. I spoke publicly for the first time in a professional setting about my journey. That year, my company won the Spirit of America Award from the United Way of America.

Inspired to do more, I took a role in community relations managing charitable giving; was appointed to the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice; helped create ReggiesSleepout.org, which raises \$165K+ annually for youth homelessness awareness; was inducted into the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame; and was named the inaugural Young Professional of the Year by *Juice Magazine*.

Today, recovery is the center of my life, making me the best husband, father, son, employee, and community member I can be.





# PATRICE POOLER

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MID-OHIO VALLEY FELLOWSHIP HOME  
PARKERSBURG, WV**

I have been clean and sober since March 27, 1995.

I was in college studying to be a counselor when I took a class on substance use and saw myself within the pages of the textbook and at the mandatory 12-step recovery meetings. I was shocked to discover I was dependent on alcohol and drugs.

Growing up in an alcoholic family, I had learned at a young age the family rules of “don’t talk, don’t trust, and don’t feel.” I had my first drink at age 14. At 16, I was forced to put a child up for adoption—the hardest thing I have ever done. It took a lot of alcohol and drugs to numb the emotional pain. I spent 21 years trying to be happy in the form of substance use, and always wanted more.

Fortunately, after 10 years of recovery, I had the chance to be reunited with my son when he was 28 years old. I have a relationship with him today. He has had a good life with parents who gave him the life I could not.

I know today that happiness is an inside job. Thanks to recovery, I have gained the courage to heal and to learn that healing comes from feeling. The very thing I had avoided was exactly what I needed to cope with life, one day at a time, without the use alcohol or drugs.

“ Thanks to recovery, I have gained the courage to heal and to learn that healing comes from feeling. ”

# ANNA SAPPAH

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ALASKA ADDICTION PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION ANCHORAGE, AK**

I am a person in long-term recovery from dependence to heroin. Treatment helped me learn how to deal with my feelings and emotions, and to live life without the use of drugs.

I've learned that substance use and other problems may have run in my family for generations, but this doesn't have to define my life. I didn't always know that; my drug use began at age 12, and by the time I was 13, I was using alcohol and other drugs daily. Now I have a much different story to share.

In 1995, I was given the opportunity to participate in outpatient treatment, where I was able to identify the issues that I had been self-medicating for most of my life. Through treatment and ongoing 12-step participation, I have been able to heal broken relationships. I have been happily married for nearly 13 years, and have regained custody and raised both of my children. I am blessed to participate in the lives of my children and grandchildren.

Because of treatment, I have gone from being a seasonal construction worker who depended on welfare and unemployment checks to being an executive director for a local nonprofit. I have earned a college degree in human services and nonprofit management and am currently in graduate school working on a degree in counseling psychology.

“ Treatment helped me learn how to deal with my feelings and emotions, and to live life without the use of drugs. I've learned that substance use and other problems may have run in my family for generations, but this doesn't have to define my life. ”



# LORIE HAMMERSTROM

## **SMART RECOVERY** BOSTON, MA

Recovery has enabled me to change my life for the better, and living has truly become much more manageable and enjoyable than it used to be.

Back in my mid-30s, I began to struggle with stress, particularly balancing a career and family. I sought relief and was prescribed antidepressants, but as I attempted to escape the feelings of stress in my life, I began drinking a bit. As time went by, “a bit” turned into more frequent drinking, and soon I found myself drinking every night, unable to stop. I told my doctor that I was drinking and I didn’t feel well, but he just continued increasing and changing my anti-depressant medications. I began to feel anxious, and it all just seemed to get worse!

I looked further for help with my drinking and found SMART Recovery® 6 years ago. There I learned how to deal with life’s upsets in rational and helpful ways, without alcohol. I had turned to alcohol as a short-term quick fix to escape my upsets and frustrations, but in the long term it made things far worse. The tools I learned in treatment provided me ways to cope with challenges, be sober, and live life and take pleasure in it.

I’m no longer overwhelmed as I was for so long. Challenging situations still arise, but I see that life isn’t so much about what happens to me, but about how I choose to think about it. That makes all the difference—in my present life and in the choices I make for my future.

“ Recovery has enabled me to change my life for the better.. ”



# PAM SCOTT

**DIRECTOR**  
**THE HEALING PLACE**  
LOUISVILLE, KY

I came to recovery a very broken woman: homeless and hopeless. I had squandered everything and hurt everyone who mattered to me, and my health was poor. I finally found a long-term program that met my needs and had an emphasis on giving back.

Today, I am the director of that program. My life has been restored and helping others in recovery is my purpose in life. I have my sons and four wonderful grandchildren. I own a home, and I have more work helping others than I can possibly imagine. This year, my youngest son is celebrating his second year of sobriety, and I am celebrating my 15<sup>th</sup>.

My motto has become "Trust God, Clean House, and Help Others." If you do those simple things and never stop working on yourself, life holds great promise. I never want to forget where I came from, as I do not want to return to that misery. Addiction is a disease that ravages entire families, and I must never forget that. Staying clean and sober is simple, but not easy.

“ I never want to forget where I came from, as I do not want to return to that misery. Addiction is a disease that ravages entire families, and I must never forget that. Staying clean and sober is simple, but not easy. ”



# THOMAS MCKNIGHT

**PUBLIC SPEAKER**  
CENTREVILLE, MD

Being in recovery means the world to me and my two daughters. I carry my 20-year medallion every day and am very proud to show it off. I have gained respect in my hometown and the surrounding communities due to the pure fact that I'm not ashamed to admit that I am in recovery.

I started drinking at 12 and became dependent by 16. Alcohol was my only drug of choice because it was easy to get. Before my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, I had four DUIs. Shortly thereafter my wife began to realize I had a severe drinking problem. When she had had enough, she threw her ring at me and said, "I will not be married to a drunk." I have not had a drink since.

Now I work closely with the local sheriff's department and teach driver's education courses. My daughters are very proud of me and enjoy when other students come up to them after hearing my driving presentation. My dream is to present my experiences to every high school in the State, as well as the country. I know I can't save them all, but if I can reach just one, then I have done what I set out to do.

Recovery is possible; it can be done. It is one day at a time. Think of staying sober today; don't worry about next week, or even tomorrow. Today is now and tomorrow is promised to no one.

# WALTER GINTER

**DIRECTOR OF RECOVERY SUPPORT  
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MEDICATION ASSISTED RECOVERY  
NEW YORK, NY**

Working in New York City in 2003, I probably seemed completely indistinguishable from the average Westport commuter. I was 54 years old and married, owned a small search firm with my wife, participated in civic activities, and was a registered voter. But each day I took a medication for a chronic medical condition.

Taking a maintenance medication is hardly atypical; people take maintenance medications for blood pressure, diabetes, anxiety, and countless other medical conditions—but the difference is that I took a medication to treat my opiate dependence. I had spent the past 20 years trying unsuccessfully to taper my addiction to heroin. At the time I did not understand that my opiate use had caused changes in my brain.

Eventually, I learned that taking medication to restore normal brain function is no different than taking prescribed medication for any other chronic medical condition, such as insulin for diabetics. Very few individuals who use medication-assisted treatments consider themselves in recovery because they have the misconception that recovery only occurs after you leave treatment—but that's not true. I realized that I was not alone, and that thousands of people have achieved abstinence and sobriety with medication-assisted treatments.

I am now 61 years old and still ride the train to New York. Only now it is to the South Bronx, where I teach methadone patients that recovery assisted by medication is just as valid as any other pathway to recovery, with the intention of preserving their health and wellness.

“ I realized that I was not alone, and that thousands of people have achieved abstinence and sobriety with medication-assisted treatments. ”

***Walter Ginter***



# JERRY MOE

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
BETTY FORD CENTER  
RANCHO MIRAGE, CA**

Recently, a mother brought her 9-year-old son, Phillip, to the children's program where I work. Although she had been clean and sober for 11 years, she wanted Phillip to participate in the program to help him understand their long family history with alcoholism and the recovery lifestyle she wholeheartedly embraced.

Phillip immediately took to the program. He'd tear up when others shared their pain, reach out his hand to anyone who needed it, and give astounding feedback with wisdom and conviction that reached beyond his years. At one point, the children were asked to write a story about how addiction has hurt their families. Phillip struggled, as he didn't have firsthand exposure, but I advised, "Just write about what you've learned here so far." He nodded, grinned, and started to write.

The next day, the adults gathered to hear the children's stories. Typically during this exercise, there is a full range of emotions—fear, guilt, shame, gratitude, joy, and sadness. I encouraged Phillip's hesitant mother to stay and listen to what Phillip had to say. When it was his turn, Phillip sat across from his mom in the middle of the circle and opted to talk just to her. "I've learned one important thing here. God really blessed me when he made you my mom. Thanks for being sober for my whole life. I promise I won't get mad at you anymore when you go to your meetings. Now I understand."

His mother fought her way to recovery. What a gift her son gave her that day. This small family reminded me that the gifts of recovery are bountiful in many, many ways.





# JO ANNE STONE

## FOUNDER A STEPPING STONE TO SUCCESS WINTER PARK, FL

Growing up, I had everything going for me—I was an honor student, cheerleader, athlete, and student council member. But even though my father is dependent on alcohol and I swore I wouldn't follow in his footsteps, I started using alcohol and drugs at age 13. I believed I was different and I could control it.

I thought I was controlling it until age 32, when I finally hit bottom with no job, no car, and no home. I called my sister, who was already in recovery, and with her support went to a 6-month treatment program. Since achieving recovery, I have returned to school, received my bachelor's degree, and became a certified addictions professional. I opened my own treatment center in July 2010.

Today, I define myself as a wife, daughter, grandmother, and business owner, as well as a person in recovery for 17 years. Despite the hardships I've faced, I love my life and wouldn't trade anything I have been through. My experience has made me more determined to succeed and a better counselor to my clients, whose experiences I can understand firsthand.

In my professional life, I have conducted research on how to best treat criminal offenders with substance use disorders and how to avoid re-offenses. I have shared my story with Congress to promote the effectiveness of treatment, the possibility of recovery, and the need for adequate funding of services. I work daily to help others get better and live honest, productive lives. Last year, as part of **Recovery Month**, I was honored to be chosen as the Florida A&E Recovery Delegate and participated in a walk in Philadelphia and spoke at my hometown walk in Orlando.

# WHITNEY O'NEILL

**OUTREACH AND PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
FACES & VOICES OF RECOVERY**  
WASHINGTON, DC

My life truly began in June 2005, when I finally broke through to the side of recovery. I had no idea recovery would give me the life that I couldn't even conceive for myself. In recovery, I gained back my physical strength, mental capacity, and spiritual well-being.

I badly needed this, because my addiction had hit me hard and fast. I went from being an excelling student and athlete from a good family to being broken, homeless, starving, and suffering from a potentially fatal liver disease. When I entered a treatment center at age 25, I didn't know what year it was or how old I was. My family had suffered greatly from the sidelines with no tools to help me.

The help I so badly needed arrived when I was arrested for being under the influence. In California, a program called Proposition 36 instituted treatment instead of jail time. Rather than serving 90 days in jail, I was offered residential treatment. Since that day, I have lived alcohol and drug free.

I was introduced to the 12-step program, which taught me how to embrace life in a way that I had never been able to before. I became active in politics and my community. I even landed a job with a top firm in Los Angeles. I now work in Washington, DC, in recovery advocacy. The biggest gift of all has been motherhood. My newborn son is nothing short of a miracle, and his father and I have built a true family. My recovery has taught me that no life is disposable and everyone deserves the hope of recovery.

“ I had no idea recovery would give me the life that I couldn't even conceive for myself. In recovery, I gained back my physical strength, mental capacity, and spiritual well-being. ”



# STEPHEN DICKERSON

**PROGRAM MANAGER  
HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT  
FOUNDATION INC.  
PRINCETON, WV**

With nearly 11 years of continuous recovery, I am proof that recovery is possible. Today, I enjoy a life filled with manifold blessings and comforts, but I didn't always.

It didn't take me long to completely bottom out from the time I first took marijuana at 14 to being in my fourth treatment center at age 20, as an IV drug user with a total of 16 cents, 2 pairs of pants, and 3 shirts. I was sick, and my substance use disorder had led me to do things I swore I never would. It caused me to make decisions that hurt everyone who had the misfortune of caring about me.

That was then, but recovery has given me a life. It has changed me from a sick man without anything to a man who has everything I could have ever imagined existed. I went back to school three times to earn a G.E.D., bachelor's, and master's in vocational rehabilitation counseling.

I have a wonderful wife, two terrific kids, a sense of direction, and a positive attitude that I might have taken for granted otherwise. I work daily to bring hopes and dreams to at-risk youth. Through my experience, I can offer hope to otherwise hopeless situations.

“ With nearly 11 years of continuous recovery, I am proof that recovery is possible. ”



# TRACEY W. LEE

**UNITY HALL/SOLANO COUNTY HEALTH  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES**  
FAIRFIELD, CA

I was once a straight-A student with a bright future, but substance use replaced my dreams with nightmares. I remember these years vividly and willingly tell my story in hopes that my pain and triumph will help others in need to find recovery and reclaim their lives.

What started out as recreational drug use in college turned into full-blown addiction by the time I reached 30. Domestic violence, depression, homelessness, bankruptcy, and suicide attempts became my life. My son's world became as unpredictable as I was, but somehow I didn't relate our chaos to my drug use.

Fortunately, my depression led me to the hospital, and instead of just giving me medicine, an astute nurse recognized my problem and sent me straight to a 14-day treatment program. That was 14 years ago. I cannot begin to express my joy at the changes in my life.

My son is now 21 and will soon graduate from Stanford University. He has flourished in my recovery, and I have been there for him in every way. I have renewed my relationships with my parents and siblings. For years, I helped "Put a Face on Recovery" and spoke at churches, high schools, city and county councils, and the State Capitol about the importance of treatment and recovery.

Today, I have my master's in public administration and I serve on the board of a recovery community support organization. I am currently a supervisor working in social services and just purchased my first home. Embracing all of my activities, work, and play is a profound sense of spirit and unwavering faith.



# DON ROTHSCHILD

## PEAK PATHS DENVER, CO

It all started in 1977 when my boss sent me to treatment for my drinking problem. I was a corporate executive with a wonderful wife, two kids, a home, two cars, and a dog. I believed that my life was fantastic.

I went to treatment, but unfortunately didn't stick with the recovery program. I continued down a path of destruction for another decade, in and out of treatment. Finally, while in treatment in 1986 and planning my next drink, I got it!

At age 56, I finished treatment and went to a halfway house in a city where I'd never been in my life. I ate, slept, lived, and breathed a recovery program, and learned that there is no problem in the world so great that a drink wouldn't make it worse.

I started a new life at an age when most retire. It was a struggle because of my age and lack of experience outside my previous industry. But I didn't drink, even when I was laid off from several jobs. I had a strong recovery program, and things that had previously slipped away were restored. I received support from my ex-wife, who always had faith in me. I returned to college at age 59 and found work as an addiction counselor. My driving privileges were returned and through bankruptcy my debt was forgiven.

Today, my wife and I are happily remarried. After starting my own business as a recovery consultant, I've found my niche. Life is better today because I can help people sustain recovery, thus giving me strength to continue on my own journey.



# FARRIS ROBERTSON

**DIRECTOR**  
**RECOVERY CHAPEL**  
SPRINGFIELD, MO

I finally found long-term recovery at age 31. That was after having lived in a ghetto, jails, and mental wards, and having participated in various recovery programs. My battle to recover is nothing unique, but my dedication to long-term sobriety shines as an example for the 400 people I impact each week.

As founder of Recovery Chapel in Springfield, MO, I'm fortunate to be celebrating 25 years in recovery. This gives me the heart and clarity to lead an organization that is growing by leaps and bounds, with 10 recovery houses, a rehabilitation facility, a worship center, a 12-step and Christian-friendly environment, and 4 business enterprises that offer training and sustenance. I am simply grateful for the opportunity to serve a world in desperate need of sanity and sobriety.

“ I am simply grateful for the opportunity to serve a world in desperate need of sanity and sobriety. ”

# JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY

**TO SHARE YOUR STORY, VISIT**

***<http://recoverymonth.gov/Voices-for-Recovery/Share-Your-Story.aspx>***

# National *Recovery Month*

Prevention Works • Treatment is Effective • People Recover

SEPTEMBER 2011



**1-800-662-HELP (4357)**  
**1-800-487-4889 (TDD)**

WWW.RECOVERYMONTH.GOV